STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

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Address Reply to:
Indiana State Board of Health
1330 West Michigan Street
P.O. Box 1964
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1964

November 4, 1985

Mr. Richard Bartelt, Chief
Emergency and Remedial Response Branch
Attention: Mr. Robert Bowden
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
230 South Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60604

949406

Dear Mr. Bartelt:

Re: Emergency Action at the
U.S.S. Lead Refinery
5300 Kennedy Avenue
East Chicago, Indiana 46312

The U.S.S. Lead Refinery has been the subject of numerous investigations by Federal, State, and local regulatory agencies. On-site sampling conducted in 1980 and 1982 showed lead concentrations ranging from 160,000 ppm to 656,000 ppm lead. Similarly, high readings were observed in 1984 and 1985. In April of 1985, lead levels as high as 32,087 ppm were detected across the street from the plant.

Airborne lead contamination has also been documented around the facility. A site specific air monitor has recorded a quarterly average of 16.143 ug/m^3, over ten times the health based standard for humans. On several occasions, staff have observed fugitive dust blowing off waste piles at the south side of the facility. A site specific fugitive dust study of U.S.S. Lead conducted by the Indiana State Board of Health (ISBH) on September 10, 1985, showed lead concentrations of 0.4 and 38 ug/m^3 at the upwind and downwind monitoring locations, respectively. This increase in lead concentration by a factor of 100 clearly indicates that the site is a significant source of ambient airborne lead contamination.

Staff have noted that fences do not completely surround the site. It is possible for the public to come into direct contact with the highly contaminated waste piles by simply walking around the fence on the east side of the plant. In addition, the fence along the north end of the facility is in a state of disrepair and might also allow direct access to the waste pile area.

In the summer of 1985, the ISBH conducted a blood lead level screening of area residents which identified one preschool child with elevated blood lead levels. Although the source of this child's lead exposure cannot be pinpointed with 100 percent certainty, based on available information, ISBH investigators believe that U.S.S. Lead is the most likely source for this child's exposure.

Due to the nature of the storage area, surface and groundwater resources are also threatened. Surface water samples collected in April of 1981 show a variety of heavy metals present in the Grand Calumet River which borders the south end of the facility. In the marsh located between U.S.S. Lead and the Grand Calumet River, significantly higher levels of heavy metals were detected. It is clear that the runoff from the site is contaminating the marsh, and as a consequence, the Grand Calumet.

The above discussion clearly establishes that U.S.S. Lead Refinery is responsible for on-going contamination of the air, surface water, and soil in the area surrounding the facility. The groundwater is also threatened because the slag and flue dust piles are located in an unconfined storage area. The possibility exists for the public to come in direct contact with contaminants at the facility and a blood lead screening indicates that the facility may be the source of human exposure. Therefore, we request that this site be the subject of an emergency action under CERCLA. Among the measures that need to be immediately undertaken to decrease the public's exposure to the contaminants existing in the area are:

1. Securing the perimeter of the site.

2. Removal of the slag and flue dust piles in the storage area.

3. Investigating the extent of off-site soil contamination.

4. Removal of off-site soil contamination.

5. Establish procedures for decontaminating surface runoff.

The State will cooperate, to the extent possible, in any emergency action. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Arthur Carter at AC 317/243-5070. Your prompt attention to this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Jacqueline W. Strecker, Chief
Remedial Response Branch
Division of Land Pollution Control

JPB/tr

cc: Hon. Peter Visclosky, United States Congressman